

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE A-13

THE WASHINGTON POST
27 May 1978

*media
SFLC*

Citing Contradictions, Senators Ask For Evidence of Cuban Role in Zaire

By John M. Goshko
Washington Post Staff Writer

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee asked the director of the Central Intelligence Agency yesterday for the evidence that prompted President Carter's charges of Cuban involvement in the rebel invasion of Zaire.

The committee's request to Adm. Stansfield Turner came against a background of confusion and some skepticism about the accusations made by Carter on Thursday.

At a Chicago press conference, the president asserted that Cuba had helped to train and equip the Angola-based rebels who invaded Zaire's Shaba province.

Administration officials have said Carter's charges were based on new intelligence received by the White House on Wednesday. However, during the past few days, different administration sources have given conflicting versions of the Cuban role in the Zaire invasion.

The State Department's official position, which it publicly reiterated yesterday, is that Cuba helped train the rebels. However, it is known that some factions within the department contend that this assertion is grounded in inadequate and unreliable intelligence.

On Wednesday night, a senior department official, in a background briefing for reporters who accompanied Secretary of State Cyrus R. Vance to New York, said he was not aware of any recent training provided the rebels by Cuba.

In response to questions yesterday about whether that contradicted the president's charges, a department spokesman, Tom Reston, said the official had not seen the new information in the possession of the White House when he spoke to reporters Wednesday night.

Reston said this fresh intelligence backed up the department's earlier

public assertion that the rebels were given Cuban training and Soviet weapons. Asked when the training took place, Reston said, "The time frame was directly leading up to the invasion."

However, some department officials are known to still have doubts about the reliability of the administration's evidence. Some reportedly have said privately they believe Carter made his public charges as part of a White House campaign to win a loosening of congressional restraints on actions the executive branch can take to counter Soviet and Cuban influence in Africa.

The confusion that these contradictions have caused became evident yesterday when Vance testified at a closed session of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

Sen. George McGovern (D-S.D.) said afterward that he called attention to official Cuban government denials of involvement in Zaire and asked Vance about the Carter charges.

Vance referred to "new evidence," McGovern said. But in response to a motion asking for a written report on this evidence, according to McGovern and other committee sources, Vance broke in to say that the new intelligence had originated with the CIA and added: "I'd prefer that you get the information from Adm. Turner."

The committee then agreed unanimously to call Turner to testify after the Senate returns from the coming week's recess. In announcing the action, committee Chairman John Sparkman (D-Ala.) denied that it re-

flected doubts among committee members about Carter's charges.

McGovern said: "I don't want to say I'm skeptical of what the president is saying. But, I recognize a contradiction when I see one, and I think it should be cleared up."

McGovern, who met with Cuban Vice President Carlos Rafael Rodriguez at the United Nations last week, said the Cuban had assured him "in the strongest possible terms" that his country had "absolutely no involvement" with the Zaire invasion.

"He told me," McGovern added, "it's as Shakespeare said, 'Much ado about nothing.'"

The senator said he and Rodriguez also had discussed Cuba's military role in other parts of Africa. According to McGovern, Rodriguez said Cuba, which aided Ethiopia in its recent conflict with Somalia, would not take part militarily in Ethiopian actions against rebels in Eritrea province "unless other foreign powers intervene."

McGovern said Rodriguez took a different line in regard to Rhodesia, where rebels operating from neighboring countries are fighting the transitional government moving Rhodesia toward black majority rule.

Rodriguez said if Anglo-American mediation efforts produce a solution to the "front-line" African states supporting the guerrillas, Cuba will accept that result. Otherwise, he added, Cuba "reserves the right to help its friends" among the guerrilla forces.

[Handwritten signature]